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Twenty-Five Years of Bonjour

Alfred N. Smith

Utah State University

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF BONJOUR

by
Alfred N. Smith

by
Alfred N. Smith





Utah State University
UMC 95
Logan, Utah 84322

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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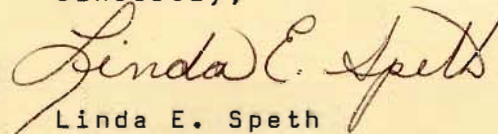
Lee H. Burke
Assistant to President
UMC 14
Campus

Dear Dr. Burke:

Utah State University Press is pleased to present you with a complimentary copy of the 70th Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities "Twenty-five Years of Bonjour" by Alfred N. Smith.

Professor Smith's lecture was well received. We hope you will enjoy reading the monograph.

Sincerely,


Linda E. Speth
Director

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Enclosure

LES/aw

Enclosure



SEVENTIETH HONOR LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY

A basic objective of the Faculty Association of Utah State University is, in the words of its constitution:

To encourage intellectual growth and development of its members by sponsoring and arranging for the publication of two Annual Faculty Honor Lectures in (a) the biological and physical sciences, including engineering, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Natural Sciences; and (b) the humanities and social sciences, including education, family life, and business administration, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities.

The administration of the University is sympathetic with these aims and shares, through the Scholarly Publications Committee, the costs of publishing and distributing these lectures.

Lecturers are chosen by a standing committee of the Faculty Association. According to the Faculty Constitution,

in choosing the lecturers, the committee shall take into consideration the achievements of faculty members in all the various areas of learning represented by the teaching and research of the Institution. Among the factors to be considered shall be outstanding achievement in one or more of the following: (1) creative activity in the field of the proposed lecture; (2) publication of research through recognized channels in the field of the proposed lecture.

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Alfred N. Smith was selected by the committee to deliver the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities. On behalf of the members of the Association, we are happy to present Professor Smith's paper.

Committee on Faculty Honor Lecture

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF BONJOUR

by
Alfred N. Smith

2015 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

70th Faculty Honor Lecture

November 27, 1984

Faculty Association

and

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Utah State University

Twenty-five Years of *Bonjour*

by
Alfred N. Smith*

While considering topics appropriate for this lecture, I became encouraged by the thought that my quarter of a century of experience in foreign language teaching would surely suggest some interesting possibilities. Up until this moment, I had never consciously counted my years of service, and frankly when I realized that I had spent two and one-half decades in front of the blackboard teaching French as a second language mainly to Anglo adults, I began to feel within the rumblings of a need to mark this anniversary in some significant way. Several days later in an amusing conversation with a friend, the subject of career years came up again. This time my colleague and I were counting years of service still ahead. The conversation was prompted by one of those days when everything about the job seemed perfunctory and unchanging. We jokingly wondered if we had the stamina to teach *Bonjour* in sixty more courses, to 1,800 more students, for 3,000 more class periods. These large numbers, that we so cleverly calculated to emphasize the routine and boredom that the next twenty years seemed to hold in store at that funny black moment on that atypically grey day, brought back the statistics I had discovered only a few days before. I had already taught *Bonjour* in more than seventy-five courses, to more than 2,250 students, for more than 3,750 hours. With some reflection, the task of doing *Bonjour* for twenty-five years had not actually been that tedious. Truthfully, as I quickly looked back, I began to realize that the *Bonjour* renditions have enjoyed remarkable variation over the years, so much variation and enjoyment that a story began to suggest itself.

I will use this lecture selfishly to celebrate my silver anniversary as a language teacher and to tell my story of "Twenty-five Years of *Bonjour*." Part of the joy of storytelling is the nostalgia that comes with reminiscing. History is much more entertaining too when the listener is let in on the juicy anecdotes and side episodes in which the principal characters are intimately embroiled as they participate in the main events of their time. I hope to make my story more interesting by sharing such incidents.

*Professor, Department of Languages and Philosophy

I will begin my personal history by recalling my involvement in the bewildering array of methodologies of language teaching that have vied for my endorsement in a generation's time. I have seen many pendulum swings, panaceas turned sour, new waves ebb and flow, ultimate methods discarded or reduced to supplemental use, cures become maladies, and hopes spring eternal. I have jumped on and off bandwagons. Capricious and cautious, naively accepting and stubbornly cynical, suspicious and enthusiastic about these various methodological trends, I have taught *Bonjour* in a hundred different ways. The way I taught *Bonjour* in that first junior high school French class in the fall of 1959 bears little resemblance to the way I teach *Bonjour* today.

Finally, since this is a true story, I will explain the linguistic, psychological, and educational theories underpinning these methods as I first understood (or misunderstood) them and as I now view them in retrospect. I plan to use this opportunity to take stock of where I have been, to identify where I am presently, and to develop some insight into where I am heading as a language teacher. In other words, this lecture is not an objective review of the philosophical and theoretical literatures and empirical research upon which these methods stand and prove their educational claims, but instead an account of my personal involvement as an adamant adherent guilty of self-righteous party-line rhetoric in favor of one particular method, as an indifferent observer uninterested in the polemics of the day, or as a doubting Thomas questioning the assumptions or the feasibility of a method because of my previous experience in the classroom.

During the first year of my career, I taught *Bonjour* as the equivalent of "Hello." I was using the grammar-translation method, rooted in the teaching of classical languages in the nineteenth century and the predominant method used to teach modern languages during the first half of this century. I was simply teaching the way I had been taught and using a grammar-translation book handed to me by the school. It never occurred to me to question what I was doing, because I did not know what else to do. I thought I was just teaching French and was not aware that I was using a method based on faulty psychology. I had no idea that I was imposing an intellectual discipline on my students to develop their minds. (I learned this fact, much to my surprise, when I was in graduate school.) I did know from my own learning experience that little fluency would result, for I was by no means a fluent speaker even with my undergraduate degree in French. I was hopeful, for myself and for my students, that skill in using the language would naturally follow from the intellectual knowledge we were sharing and the formal grammatical analyses we were making. I recall not being overly thrilled by the daily task of presenting rules, providing examples, and converting one language into the other in reading and writing exercises. However, I tried to portray rules as originally and ingeniously as possible and provide outlandish examples that would stick

in students' minds as key phrases for rapid recall of a rule. (I remember teaching the order of preverbal object pronouns to the tune of the "Mexican Hat Dance.") I was optimistic that I was preparing my students in some ways "to explore eventually the second language's literature, to gain a greater understanding of their first language and to cope with difficult learning situations in the future."¹

I was not unhappy teaching French this way, and I enjoyed the two English classes I had to teach because there were not enough students in foreign languages to support a full-time position. Enrollments in languages at that time were limited to students in the college preparatory cycle. They took languages to meet the two-year college entrance requirement. I was relatively happy with my group of elite college-bound French students.

In my second year as a public school teacher I heard about a New Key method, an oral-aural approach to language learning. I attended a teacher-training institute at Utah State University funded by the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. In nine weeks I was thoroughly indoctrinated as an audio-lingualist. *Bonjour* in the audio-lingual age was a fixed pattern taught as a greeting marker with no translation. My students memorized short dialogues that opened with *Bonjour*. I conducted mindless pattern drills completely devoid of reality in which students responded to cues to learn *Bonjour*.

(T:Teacher; S:Students)

T: Tom.

S: *Bonjour*, Tom.

T: Dick.

S: *Bonjour*, Dick.

T: Harry.

S: *Bonjour*, Harry.

As I look back, audio-lingualism should have never come into existence. A bizarre combination of events, schools of thought, and certain people in the right places at the wrong time contributed to the advent of this methodology, which was definitely an anachronism in its own time. Chastain in *Developing Second-Language Skills* comments on this ill-timed method. "At a time when other subjects such as math and chemistry were emphasizing comprehension of principles and conceptual understanding, modern language teaching was emphasizing rote learning and drill procedures."²

I wondered at the peculiar origins of audio-lingualism. Why did language educators in the late fifties look back to the schools of psychology and linguistics of the twenties and thirties for their models for the “New Key” instead of consulting more contemporary models? Several answers present themselves. In the late fifties, there was no marriage of psychology and linguistics as there was in the twenties and thirties. During the first part of this century, linguists and psychologists were determined to bring to their disciplines the precision of the empirical sciences. These newly formed scientists rejected introspection and mentalistic theories and proclaimed as knowledge only their rigorous descriptions of observable behavior. As a result, the new school of descriptive linguistics developed, and it took as its models the experimental techniques of behavioral psychology.

Leonard Bloomfield, a new-linguistic scientist was interested in methods of teaching languages using the operant-conditioning techniques of contemporary psychologists. It was Bloomfield and his followers who were largely responsible for developing the new intensive approach to language learning used by the Army Specialized Training Program at the beginning of World War II to produce high levels of oral-aural proficiency in Armed Forces personnel in a short time. The results were impressive because the handpicked students were highly motivated and were in training five to six hours a day. One has only to read briefly from Bloomfield’s *Outline Guide for the Practical Study of Foreign Languages* published in 1942 to see the close connection between this intensive method and the subsequent adaptation called the audio-lingual method. “The command of a language is not a matter of knowledge: the speakers are quite unable to describe the habits which make up their language. The command of a language is a matter of practice, and language learning is overlearning: anything else is of no use.”³

In 1957, fifteen years later (years which included a postwar lull in public interest in foreign languages), the current theorists in psychology and linguistics were not so closely linked. Noam Chomsky, the principal innovator in linguistic theory in the late fifties and sixties, rejected the “behavioristic theories concerning both language and language learning as being too elementary and simplistic and adopted a mentalistic, rationalist view of learning and language closely related to the basic premises of cognitive psychologists.”⁴ Not until nearly a decade later, however, did Chomsky in *Language and Mind* (1968) begin to view “the study of language as being part of the larger context of cognitive psychology.”⁵ Furthermore, Chomsky and the other transformational-generative linguists were not interested in language teaching as Bloomfield and the structuralists were.

Therefore, in the late fifties, foreign language educators seeking new directions looked to the resources of the past and found enthusiastic support from structural linguists. Foreign language teachers were also pressed into

action by the urgencies prompted by William Riley Parker's *The National Interest and Foreign Languages*, the first Russian Sputniks, and James Conant's book *The American High School Today*. Parker, then head of the foreign language section of the Modern Language Association, warned the nation and its leaders that neglecting foreign language study threatened national security.⁶ The launching of Sputnik fired public criticism of America's schools and encouraged the rapid enactment of the National Defense Education Act, which included generous federal support for the improvement of foreign language programs. In his book, Conant pleaded for upgrading academic standards and recommended four years of one foreign language for the academically talented and that they study a second foreign language as well.⁷ With little time to study ongoing language and learning theories and pushed by the pressing events of the day, the foreign language community opted for an already outdated audio-lingual method.

How familiar all this sounds today. In lieu of Parker, we have Paul Simon and *The Tongue-tied American* and *Strength Through Wisdom*, a report to the President from the President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies.⁸ Although we have regained supremacy in space and the threat of Sputnik has long since sputtered, we are now threatened by Toyotas, Seikos, and Sonys. And isn't *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, a report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, just a basic repeat of Conant's appraisal?⁹ So the pendulum swings.

Meanwhile, back at Hill Junior High School in Denver, Colorado, in 1960, I was becoming an expert practitioner of audio-lingual techniques. At twenty-four I was a slender, would-be actor turned teacher-clown with endless reserves of energy. I enjoyed being center stage, bawling out cues in rapid-fire drills, flailing my arms about as I engaged the chorus of student voices in the repetition of dialogue lines whose meanings I had acted out through exaggerated gestures, distorted facial expressions, and stick figure drawings.

As a true believer of audio-lingualism, I accepted the basic assumptions of the method summarized by Wilga Rivers in four basic statements and three subcorollaries:¹⁰

Assumption 1. Foreign language learning is basically a mechanical process of habit formation.

Corollary 1: Habits are strengthened by reinforcement.

Corollary 2: Foreign language habits are formed most effectively by giving the right response, not by making mistakes.

Corollary 3: Language is behavior and behavior can be learned only by inducing the student to behave.

Assumption 2: Language skills are learned more effectively if items of the foreign language are presented in spoken form before written form.

Assumption 3: Analogy provides a better foundation for foreign language learning than analysis.

Assumption 4: The meanings which the words of a language have for the native speaker can be learned only in a matrix of allusions to the culture of the people who speak that language.

These assumptions were defended in the audio-lingual bible, *Language and Language Learning* by Nelson Brooks whose glorious phrases I could quote by heart.¹¹ I heard exciting sermons by descriptive linguists and educators of the behaviorist school extolling the virtues of the method. Like thousands of other language teachers who caught the fever, I believed revolution was at hand, which Chastain characterizes in these words:

Teachers everywhere were going to meetings, to workshops, and to institutes to learn about the audio-lingual approach to teaching modern languages. The professional journals were filled with articles explaining the new techniques and procedures. The whole profession was overflowing with previously unknown energy, excitement and enthusiasm.¹²

I went to the meetings to hear the word. I proselytized at workshops. I wrote articles defending the faith and as a demonstration teacher and methods instructor, I spread the gospel in the NDEA institutes. I overflowed with enthusiasm, and language classrooms overflowed with students. Schools hired more foreign language teachers and built language laboratories with government money. The public smiled favorably hoping that in a few short years their children would be conversing as fluently in French as Jackie Kennedy.

All the excitement, however, was short-lived. First teachers noticed (but few admitted) that everything was not coming up roses. Students did not always like being parrots and responding like Pavlovian dogs. I even protested in an article, "The language student is not a robot to be programmed by the teacher...to spit out language patterns and memorized dialogue lines."¹³ The new American Method was not producing competent speakers of other languages, and the profession was embarrassed as the public complained in its gruff Clara Peller voice, "Where's the bilinguals?"

After only a year of trying to adhere to pure audio-lingualism in the classroom, I began to cheat. When I saw tired, bored faces I dropped the drills and brought in activities that allowed for more creative expression. (Mistakes

be hanged!) I also gave rules to clarify quickly a point of confusion instead of waiting for the slower process of analogy to run its course. I translated words and phrases literally when meanings were not readily evident because of insufficient contextual clues.

Audio-lingualism was doomed to a rise and fall spanning less than a decade. Its decline was due in part to overly simplistic and grossly inadequate assumptions about language acquisition. The disenchantment with the method also paralleled a growing discontent with the establishment at large. From the mid-sixties to the early seventies, students protested the Vietnam War, demanded relevance and individual freedom in learning, and participated in nonviolent sit-ins. These students wanted a voice. Their call for choice and relevance resulted in the elimination of many requirements (including foreign languages), the so-called humanization of the curriculum, and a gravitation toward career education.

How was the rigid, impersonal, lockstep, teacher-centered audio-lingual approach to survive these changes? How was a method that viewed all students as one basic language learning machine and offered relevance only with acquired proficiency five to eight years down the road to respond to this time of protest? The audio-lingual method weathered poorly these revolutionary events, and foreign language educators saw themselves facing again in less than ten years "the old problem of dwindling enrollments, student apathy, and lack of public and governmental support."¹⁴

A basic tenet of audio-lingualism survived the upheaval of this period. From its outset, audio-lingualism was clearly dedicated to teaching cultural patterns. Audio-lingualists believed that the foreign language student "should come to realize that language is the essential expression of a people's behavior and outlook, the medium in which and by which they think about and react to life."¹⁵ Robert Politzer, an early proponent of audio-lingualism insisted, "If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning; for unless he is warned, unless he receives cultural instruction, he will associate American concepts or objects with the foreign symbols."¹⁶

Audio-lingualists dealt with the teaching of culture primarily by placing the dialogue material in culturally authentic settings. Cultural learnings were consequently incidental and secondary to the main effort of dialogue memorization.

Intentional teaching of "way of life" culture emerged in the late sixties as a response to the demand for relevance. Foreign language educators began to see the culture component of language instruction as a way to appeal to young people revolting against conformity and dominant group norms. The inclusion of more culture in the language course would perhaps win back students

by showing them that the basic goals of language instruction sympathized with some of the main objectives of the student movements. Certainly students pleading for the acceptance of pluralism and diversity and the recognition and understanding of the values of subcultures in American society would take classes whose primary aim as expressed by Tora Ladu was “to open minds to bring about an empathy with other peoples.”¹⁷

With the cultural revolution, we began taking more care to teach the sociocultural meanings attached to a language. I taught that *Bonjour* was an early-day greeting (used only through midafternoon), that *Bonjour* was usually used with the name or title of the person being addressed, and that *Bonjour* was always accompanied by physical contact usually as a handshake used by males and females alike. I taught the proper execution of the handshake. I made several cross-cultural comparisons with American ways of greeting and asked students to examine the cultural values inherent in greeting procedures.

Have I been a successful teacher of culture? The subject fascinates me and every year I have tried to impart to my students what I consider to be significant information about French culture. I have dutifully mastered the many techniques used to teach culture. I can introduce a culture capsule, present a culture assimilator, set up a minidrama, and model an audio-motor unit as well as the next.¹⁸ I must admit that as an incurable Francophile I have not always maintained the objectivity I should during culture lessons. I remember regretting having said not long ago to a large class of impressionable, ethnocentric beginners, “Political leaders in France are intellectuals with impressive academic credentials. The President of the French Republic could never be a former movie star.” Undoubtedly, I did little to perpetuate cultural relativism by that prejudicial remark.

I can best describe my efforts as a teacher of culture by pleading guilty to the indictment made by Genelle Morain in the mid-seventies as she reviewed a decade of culture teaching.

For over a decade now the culture bandwagon has gone up and down the streets of our profession. Teachers, speakers and workshop-givers have leaped eagerly aboard, convinced that the rationale behind the calls for culture is a sound one. We’ve applauded the speeches, studied the articles, and attended the workshops. But where are the results we’ve worked ten years to produce? Where are the students who pour out of our classrooms endowed with “a deep understanding of the target culture” and “increased cross-cultural sensitivity”? Undoubtedly such informed and sensitive students exist, but our pensions may become collectible before we find them. Their scarcity casts doubts on the effectiveness of our efforts to preach culture.

The problem, I submit, lies not in our preaching but in our teaching. Foreign language teachers do not do a sophisticated job of teaching culture. They do a sporadic, hit-or-miss, always-on-the-surface kind of job because that is the best a bandwagon ride can produce.¹⁹

Morain continues by suggesting that language teachers of culture need more training in psycholinguistics, social psychology, and anthropology to do a creditable job. Language teachers need to study the formation of attitude, the nature of prejudice, the phenomenon of stereotyping, and the role of paralinguistic and kinesic features in communication.²⁰ Above all, they need to become aware of the hierarchy of values in their own culture to understand their perceptions of and reactions to other value systems.

I have tried to educate myself in these areas. The more I read, the more I realize the importance of developing my students' cultural communication skills. However, the more I learn, the more cautious I become for fear of overgeneralizing or misrepresenting some complex feature. Most of all, I have learned that understanding another sociocultural system requires as much effort, patience, and time as acquiring the linguistic system attached to it.

The increased emphasis on the culture component of the foreign language course was only one of several major changes in which I became involved at the end of my first decade of teaching. In the spring of 1970, I became committed to an approach to education that consumed the greater part of my professional effort for the next four years. Ten years into my career, at a time when most professionals have reached the status of disillusioned veteran and have rejected cynically the impossible dream, I joined with unbridled zeal a philosophical movement that rekindled a dream in my idealistic teacher's heart: the dream of making foreign language study accessible to all students according to their individual abilities, interests, and needs without the menace of failure. This was the promise of individualized instruction. I was delivered from the rigid, lockstep, mechanistic grip of audio-lingual habit formation into the open arms of a new religion. But this religion was not another newfangled method. It did not prescribe "when, where, or how to teach phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics or lexicon," but instead proposed "a way of behaving and relating, an attitude toward learners and the process of learning," explained Altman, one of the founding fathers.²¹

Again critics attacked the inadequacies of the American education system, this time in best-selling books attracting public attention. In only four short years (1969-72), the following titles ranked high on the nonfiction lists: *Freedom and Beyond*, *Crisis in the Classroom*, *Schools without Failure*, and *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*.²² These books compared schools to jails, decried the injurious consequences of student failure, pleaded for a

break with the mediocrity of tradition, and called for new, more humane approaches to education. American schools and colleges began to answer the charges by implementing systems of individualized instruction.

I was ready to make changes too. When Donald Ryberg at the Seattle Symposium on the Training of Foreign Language Teachers (1970) asked the audience to join him in his guerrilla warfare against the malignancies present in the language-teaching world, I was incited to action. When he said, "Let's bomb the teacher-as-God concept. Down with the concept of the teacher as a combination ringmaster, choir director, and Shakespearean actor, and up with the idea of the teacher as a facilitator of learning and resource manager," I said, "Amen."²³

"Hallelujah" for instruction designed to provide for individual learning styles, individual learning rates, and individual goals. "Hooray" for criterion-referenced evaluation where students were tested to find out what they could do and not to assign a grade. "A round of applause" for an evaluation system giving students as many chances and as much time as they needed to attain an acceptable level of performance. "Three cheers" for a grading system rejecting a single standard for all and describing achievement more humanely in terms of the effort and ability each individual brought to the learning task.

I embraced the new ideology wholeheartedly, rolled up my sleeves, and began establishing a full-fledged individualized program. I produced Learning Activity Packets, reformed the laboratory system, engaged an army of assistants, and involved the whole department in a total revision of the lower division offering. My new role as teacher was to help students assume the responsibility of learning *Bonjour* on their own, at their own rate, and using the learning mode of their preference. As the learning facilitator, I provided structure, programmed materials, and encouragement. The responsibility of learning *Bonjour* was now where it should be, squarely on the students' shoulders.

My enthusiasm caught the attention of some of the high priests of the movement who gave me some evangelical duties. My evangelism took me to New Orleans, Boston, and Chicago where I talked about the quest. I was even invited to Stuttgart, Germany, to discuss "Applications of the Individualization Theory to the Training of Foreign Language Teachers" at the Fourth International Congress of Applied Linguistics.²⁴ But the major charge of my ministry was to serve individual students, and so I did not dare stay too long away from the second floor, north end of Old Main.

And the verdict? Of course, it is impossible to conduct empirical research determining the effectiveness of a philosophy, which, as I've already stated, is what individualization is. There are always problems implementing ideals, especially when existing realities, structures, and attitudes are predisposed to

reject them. Students, who only a few short years before individualization were denouncing the abuses of lockstep, mass instruction, quickly learned to abuse the humanitarian features built into the new system. Self-pacing became procrastination. The old conflict of human nature versus humane ideals was at hand.

Teachers and students had operated in their traditional roles for so long that they were wary of the new models for interacting with each other. Many teachers never felt comfortable playing the parts of counselor, facilitator, and learning manager. The egos of some teacher-superstars prevented them from giving up center stage and subordinating teaching to learning. How could they deprive their students of the greatest show on earth? There were many students who were not confident about assuming so much responsibility for their own learning. Some were not able to state their personal educational goals. Others were not sure what their preferred mode of learning was or when they were ready to pass off an objective.

There were also certain basic American values in conflict. The spirit of competitiveness, highly esteemed in American society, and the ideal of equal opportunity for all, also highly valued, are incompatible in many ways.²⁵ Although Americans value athletics in schools to give all a chance to play and to teach group cooperation, a look at shouting parents and pleading cheerleaders during the heat of the game tells another story: What Americans really prize is winning. Teachers and students also bring this competitiveness into the classroom. Connie Allen, one of my very gifted language learners and a highly competitive student, hated individualized instruction, even though she was able to achieve more in less time. Because students took tests whenever they were ready and we no longer had in-class test days, Connie was denied the sadistic pleasure of turning to Simple Simon, her neighbor, and asking, "What did you get?" And Connie was upset when she learned that Simple Simon got an "A" in the course too.

"It's not fair!" she complained.

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Because we both got the same grade and yet I know more than he does. I can speak better than he can, I understand better than he does, and my accent is better than his."

"Yes," I explained, "but he had to work harder and longer than you and needed many more retakes to perform satisfactorily on all of the objectives."

"But I'm still better at French than he is, and the grade doesn't show the difference," she argued.

"That's because I'm not grading aptitude and intelligence, but performance, and the standards for performance differ according to individual ability," I insisted. "It took Sy a week to reach a level of readiness that you achieved in less than an hour, and what you performed perfectly on the first

try took Sy three tries.”

“In my other classes an ‘A’ means I’m one of the best. In this class it means nothing.” Connie turned and walked away.

“Well, I hope it means something to Sy,” I thought.

Connie wasn’t the only person concerned about grading. The Office of Admissions and Records and, I suspect, the Dean’s Office were annoyed at all the incompletes and the sudden grade inflation.

Yes, there were problems, but there were successes as well. Howard Altman reported that evaluations of individualized language programs at the universities of Cincinnati, Georgia, Kentucky, Washington, and West Virginia showed that students preferred learning at their own speed rather than at someone else’s, that students had improved attitudes toward language study, and that rates of attrition in language courses decreased.²⁶ Although we experienced fewer successes in these areas at Utah State University, we did see increased enrollments.

Our department has now abandoned most aspects of individualization (except for vestiges of the system in the lab program), as have most schools. But I learned from the experience and am grateful to the movement for giving me the exhilarating opportunity to have that dream, even though it was, as it turned out, impossible.

Individualized instruction focused on learning and performance curriculum. Therefore, defining learning by the successful completion of carefully stated performance objectives became the foundation on which many individualized programs were built. The wave of criticism against education had created a public no longer interested in listening to claims and promises. The people paying the bills for education wanted to know what they were getting for their money. They wanted to see what students could actually do as the result of an instructional program. In one reading program funded by the U.S. Office of Education, teachers were paid by the rate of success of their pupils, receiving nothing for pupils who did not achieve a grade-level improvement.²⁷ The pressure was on education to be accountable. Educational leaders regarded behavioral objectives as a way of achieving accountability or at least as a way of protecting themselves against the wagging finger of blame. After all, if teachers provided students with a list of objectives that stated precisely the behavior, the purpose of the behavior, the conditions under which the behavior was performed, the level of performance considered adequate, and an instructional setting conducive to the attainment of the objective, then nothing could go wrong. Both students and teachers would know what to expect from the course, and the public would have visible proof of learning.

Now, my lesson plan for teaching *Bonjour* became a statement of objectives describing the students’ performance and listing the conditions of the behavior and the criteria used to evaluate the performance:

Students will say *Bonjour* plus a name or a title in response to a greeting from the teacher or other students.

Students will use the greeting *Bonjour* at the beginning of each class period and when French-speaking visitors enter.

Students will pronounce the nasal vowel /*õ*/ in the first syllable of *Bonjour* without producing the nasal consonant /*n*/ 80 percent of the time.

I have always believed that students should know from the first day of class what they can expect to learn in a certain course. I have always tried to think of teaching as a way of providing meaningful activities to help students learn certain skills, mechanical or intellectual. I have always insisted that students understand exactly how their performance will be evaluated. However, I have never been able to write a list of behavioral objectives without laughing. I have an absolute aversion to this kind of specificationism that states the obvious and dwells on low-level skill behaviors.

I agree with James Hoetker who suggests that educators not waste time writing low-level specifications. He recommends that teachers understand that such low-level learnings are simply groundwork for the development of high-level behaviors. Teachers should devote their time to finding ways to operationalize the high-level behaviors, which “include, among cognitive behaviors, the application of abstractions in novel situations, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, plus among affective behaviors, attending, responding, valuing, and in some cases, organization.”²⁸

I also “object” to objectives because the conditions and criteria for performance seem so arbitrary. What does it mean to do something correctly eight out of ten times, within a period of fifteen minutes or without the use of a dictionary? Jack Frymier, keynote speaker at the 1973 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) Annual Convention in Boston, warned against this type of arbitrariness saying that certain behaviors must be performed perfectly every time and others can be performed imperfectly most of the time with no harmful results. For example, it would be absurd to state as an objective: “The pilot will land the aircraft safely eight out of ten times.”²⁹ I have written very few objectives, but I have always tried to see teaching primarily as a way to facilitate student language behavior.

About ten years ago I began dabbling with another approach to language teaching rooted in Confluent Education and Gestalt awareness theory. This humanistic view of education attempts to integrate cognitive and affective learnings to bring about emotional as well as intellectual growth. Humanistic foreign language teaching strives to develop a higher degree of self-

actualization and to improve interpersonal skills through the medium of the second language. Charles A. Curren, a priest with a doctorate in psychology, calls the approach the Counseling-Learning Model. In his model the students are like clients seeking to fulfill personal values and goals, and the teacher is a counselor, there to guide and reduce anxiety.³⁰ Beverly Galyean, a former nun, calls this process "Language from Within." To her this approach makes students "aware of a new power of language, that being, language as the mirror and vehicle for uncovering their vast inner worlds of feelings, images, dreams, voices and energies."³¹ Gertrude Moskowitz describes the method as "Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Classroom."³² In her book she offers 120 different humanistic awareness exercises.

Students learning *Bonjour* in this teaching model would identify and probe the emotions and feelings they attach to this expression in any given circumstance. They would practice *Bonjour* by imagining the people they would wish or not wish to greet. They would explore in the target language the reasons for not wanting to say *Bonjour*. They would recall incidents and consequences where they omitted *Bonjour* or uttered an especially affectionate *Bonjour*.

I have used humanistic teaching most successfully in developing experiential reading and writing units.³³ Students are usually willing to explore their feelings and values through the creative activity of poetry and story writing. With their permission, I then turn their written work into reading material for the class and use it to teach comprehension skills. Although I enjoy the opportunity of getting to know students better, which this approach provides, I am sensitive to student privacy. Disclosure is never forced, always initiated by the individual, and limited to topics appropriate to a classroom setting. My job is to teach language, not to develop personality, and students understand that information sharing always takes place in the context of language practice. However, practicing language in a socializing, humanistic framework makes the point immediately clear to students that the reason for learning a language is to communicate with other human beings.

The above idea that language is personal and communication has a purpose reminds me of a movement, which started in Europe in the early seventies, known as the notional-functional syllabus. Constance K. Knop explains the aim of the notional-functional syllabus as developing a curriculum "organized by *notional categories* (the topics and ideas that a learner needs to handle) and, within those notional categories, the *functions* (the interactions and purposes) that the learner might choose to carry out in that situation."³⁴ As I read more about developing functional proficiency in a foreign language, I began to see *Bonjour* in a new light and to teach it differently. *Bonjour* was not just a vocabulary word, but a function in a notional category. The notional category was perhaps "meeting a friend," and

the function was, of course, “greeting.” When the register of greeting was familiar, *Bonjour* became *Salut*.

Language teachers in the United States have been slow to accept the notional-functional syllabus. They continue to organize their syllabi around grammatical forms thinking that grammatical competence leads to communicative competence. The notional-functional syllabus, on the other hand, structures the course in terms of learner communication needs rather than structural gradation. I believe that the notional-functional syllabus offers motivational aspects that the traditional grammatical syllabus neglects. After all, as Alexander points out, “Students’ goals are functional rather than grammatical; they want to *do* something with language.”³⁵

Teachers wanting students to do something with language have dressed *Bonjour* in many costumes over the years. There are outfits available that I have never even tried. For example, the Silent Way is an attire which my *Bonjour* has never worn. I have never used color-coded, wooden, cuisinaire rods and word charts to get students to communicate and make inductive insights about the nature of *Bonjour*. Caleb Gattegno, British mathematician, psychologist, and founder of the Silent Way, claims that this approach brings about complete linguistic independence in students.³⁶ The teacher gradually bequeaths complete ownership of *Bonjour* to the students as they become increasingly proficient. Eventually the teacher becomes a silent presence, an available resource, used only when the need arises.

I have never suited *Bonjour* up in the Lozanov method either. The method is more familiarly known as Suggestopedia and was originated by physician and psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov in Bulgaria.³⁷ Although in my own way I have tried to create a positive, supportive atmosphere in which *Bonjour* could germinate and flourish, I have never seen the need to provide soft lighting, carpeted walls, yoga exercises synchronized to deep breathing, with baroque music in the background. The “seance” atmosphere of Suggestopedia is supposed to foster the “unconscious absorption” of the language.

What is happening in foreign language education today? There are new theories and research findings with important implications for the classroom. I find myself again engrossed in trying to implement aspects of these theories. However, past experiences have taught me to exercise some reserve and to experiment judiciously with changes considering the realities and constraints of my teaching situation.

To present these theories and show my interaction with them, I would like to perform a short play. Imagine that I am facing a panel of several august linguists, psychologists, and researchers. I can ask or say anything I want, and they, in turn, will respond. I will first introduce the cast of characters.³⁸

Stephen D. Krashen, language researcher at the University of Southern California, the leading advocate of theories that make important distinctions between language learning and language acquisition.

Tracy D. Terrell, professor of Spanish at the University of California, Irvine, the originator of the Natural Approach, a language-teaching method based on Krashen's theories.

James J. Asher, psychologist at San Jose State University, developer of the Total Physical Response method of language learning that emphasizes an initial period of listening with physical rather than oral response to language stimuli.

Marina Burt and *Heidi Dulay*, language researchers at Bloomsbury West, San Francisco, experts in the areas of first- and second-language acquisition.

Al Smith, humble, but dedicated language teacher.

Al: I am a dedicated language teacher. My main objective is to help my students develop the ability to communicate well in the second language.

Krashen: We can develop "ability" in the second language in two ways. We can "learn" and we can "acquire." We learn in the classroom. When we learn, we develop conscious knowledge about the language. We do drills, learn rules, write exercises, learn dialogues, and mainly focus our attention on the form of language. We acquire subconsciously by picking up the language in the natural environment. We interact with native speakers and concentrate on communication and meaning. Fluency in a second language is due to what we acquire and not what we learn.

Al: Well, I can see one clear implication of what you've just said. If I want my students to develop fluency, I will have to provide an acquisition environment for them. Can I do this in the classroom? How? And just what do we do when we *acquire*, anyway?

Terrell: Mainly we listen and try to understand. We turn the classroom into a source of meaningful listening, a place where students can obtain the comprehensive input necessary for language acquisition.

Al: But why all this emphasis on listening? I want my students to learn to speak the language. Don't we learn to speak by speaking?

Asher: Forcing speaking too early, in my opinion, is very much a case of putting the cart before the horse. Listening precedes speaking. I would go so far as to say that listening comprehension maps the blueprint for the future acquisition of speaking.

Al: Whooooops! You lost me there. What do you mean by “blueprint”?

Asher: I simply mean that language acquirers, before they talk, use their understanding of what they hear to construct an intricate map of the linguistic system of the language. As this system is internalized, speaking naturally emerges.

Al: Wait a minute! You say “speaking emerges.” That sounds a little far-fetched to me.

Burt/Dulay: Well, this idea is confirmed by most of the researchers we’ve studied. They say that second-language learners in natural environments begin by listening, then they respond nonverbally or in their own language, and finally, they start producing the new language.

Al: But you’re talking about the natural environment. I want to know if I can expect to achieve “emergent speaking” in my classroom.

Terrell: Yes, I think you can. The secret is to focus on communication and meaning. Then you let students communicate in any way they can and only when they are ready to do so. Speech at first will be incomplete and will contain many errors. Early speech on the part of students will usually consist of simple words and short phrases. Some students may use English in early responses or even mix the two languages. However, as acquisition increases this kind of mixed mode is quickly left behind.

Al: Students blurting out partial responses in English and making lots of mistakes! Good Grief! And all this in the name of communication! I want communication with accuracy!

Krashen: In due time, my friend. A little patience is recommended here. “Mistakes” as you call them are simply the transitional forms that emerge from incompletely formulated systems en route to acquisition. You surely have noticed that your students continue to make errors (especially in free communication) even after you have taught a grammar point. What amazes you is that even when you think they have learned the point well because of their good performance on drills and tests, they still make mistakes. You were right to think that they had learned well. Well, this little proverb might set the issue straight: “A rule learned is not a rule acquired.” Drilling and grammar exercises lead to learning, but not to acquisition. And as we have already said, acquisition, not learning, leads to fluency.

Al: This is fascinating. My next question then is how can I teach grammar expressly with the goal of acquisition in mind?

Krashen: I don't think you can. In the first place adherence to a grammatically sequenced syllabus will by its very nature distort any attempt at real communication. Even if you contextualize and personalize the grammar point, you are limiting the natural avenues of real communication. To develop acquisition you have to use language to communicate real ideas. When we do this, grammar may take care of itself.

Al: Well, I'm sorry, but I have a textbook, departmental objectives, and tests that are all structured around a grammatically sequenced syllabus. I have to teach grammar. Besides I think it's important.

Terrell: That's fine. We're not saying you shouldn't teach grammar. Of course you should. And yes, it is important. Students can benefit from conscious learning of grammar, especially when they have time to think about it and when the focus is on form. By teaching structure you can produce performers who can use grammar as a supplement to acquisition in situations where grammar use is appropriate. These situations mostly occur in written work, in prepared speech, or on homework assignments. But students cannot be expected to apply rules consciously in oral communicative activities. In real communication, acquisition is in force and transitional errors will naturally surface.

Al: Surely there is a way to follow a grammatically sequenced syllabus and concentrate on real communication at the same time. You see, I want to have my cake and eat it too. I want to include activities that will foster acquisition and I want to teach grammar too. I'm going to try to bring about a happy marriage. After all I am the classroom expert. I'm sure that with my teaching experience I can take your theories and research findings and arrive at a process that will achieve what I want. In my attempts to develop this process, do you have any final words of advice to offer?

Burt/Dulay: We would advise that you provide many opportunities for listening. Don't force speaking. Remember that our review of the research shows that listening is the most effective way to learn to speak. We would also advise that you adhere to what we call the "here and now" principle, i.e., always provide concrete referents in your presentations so that learners can figure out the meaning of the language used.

Krashen: Yes, I would agree. It is very important that the input you provide be comprehensible. I would add too that in order for this input to be useful for language acquisition it has to be processed by the learner primarily on its meaning, not its form. And I might add that the more interesting and relevant the material is for the acquirer, the better the chances are that acquisition will occur. The input should be so interesting that students are not even aware that it is encoded in a second language, so focused are they on the message.

Terrell: The secret in achieving this high degree of interest is to let students initiate and provide the content of the lesson. Allow students opportunities to present their own experiences and opinions.

Asher: Another way to involve students actively and to get their minds off of form is to have them perform actions in response to commands they hear. Try to nest the structure in some kind of physical operation.

Al: These are all great ideas for the "acquisition" part of the lesson. When I do focus on form (the grammar point) any suggestions on what I should do?

Terrell: Present the grammar lesson in the target language. The teacher talk input involved in the explanation may contribute somewhat to acquisition. Talk in the second language about the grammar of the second language will be the most beneficial part of the lesson in terms of acquisition, certainly not the grammar facts learned.

Al: Well, I must be off to get started on these ideas. Wish me luck.

All experts: Good luck, Al. Please let us know how things turn out.

THE END

And how have things turned out? It is probably too early to tell. I have taught *Bonjour* using Total Physical Response giving commands that students perform:

Stand up.

Shake it once and say, *Bonjour*.

Go to John.

Release it.

Smile at him.

Go back to your seat.

Take his right hand.

I have taught *Bonjour* using the Natural Approach. I have acted out the greeting many times. The students listened, observed the situation, reacted with a nod, a handshake, a smile, a "Hi," or a blank stare. I have noticed that as the language is quietly internalized some students begin to let *Bonjour* emerge as an acquired utterance, never at my insistence, but simply because the greeting wants to come out. I have presented modified intentional grammar lessons by focusing first on meaningful contexts, by using here and now referents, and by providing copious opportunities for listening to comprehensible input without forcing speaking. All I can say about the results at this point is that I am encouraged enough to continue experimenting.

I will end my story with a fable told by Ray Clifford entitled "Excellence in Foreign Language Education: If We Had It, Would We Know It?"³⁹ The fable as I will tell it only considers the teaching approaches I have described.

Once upon a time there was a royal kingdom which had a little red schoolhouse. The little red schoolhouse was dedicated to the teaching of foreign languages. It was a lovely schoolhouse. And since the King had decreed that all students had to pass through that schoolhouse as part of their educational rites, the teachers were very happy.

Then one day the students became restless. "Our training is not relevant," they chanted in unrelenting pattern drills. The King's court went on an around-the-world tour to study the problem. When they returned, they joined the rising chorus of discord. "Your students can't hack it," they said in their precise diplomatic language and dropped foreign language requirements. The schoolhouse was befuddled. Hadn't it always done its best?

Meanwhile, news of the ruckus reached the King who sent his wizards and wise men to solve the problem. Each expert arrived at the schoolhouse in an elegantly decorated horse drawn wagon and, since they were the King's representatives, they were heralded by an accompanying brass band. However, this pomp and ceremony soon became old, and the school began to say, "Oh, no! Not another bandwagon!"

One by one the King's experts arrived. One proposed, "We should use a grammar translation methodology," but the teachers responded that that method had lost its gloss. Another suggested the audio-lingual method with its motto "Parrot or perish." But that method didn't succeed because it missed its cue. One capital idea was to finance improvement through federal funding, but even that failed to earn the public's long-term interest. Criterion-referenced instruction might have been the answer, but after developing thousands of objectives, teachers decided that objectives were objectionable. One visitor suggested that the school adopt the eclectic method, but that idea was rejected because teachers concluded that it was semantically impossible to even discuss *the* eclectic method. Even the visitor pushing communicative competence failed to get her idea across. Then a wizard with a cuisinnaire rod asked for volunteers to use the silent way, but no one spoke up. About this time another visitor arrived, playing baroque music and suggesting after all of the other suggestions, suggestopedia. His slogan "Go for baroque!"

was catchy, but the students were too comfortable to follow up on it. From another direction came complete physical response methodology, which worked until they tried to teach the phrase "Jump out the window," and it was a two-story schoolhouse. Still no one was extremely concerned because all teachers at that time were suffering from falling student enrollments. A European curriculum developer soon arrived, but the teachers didn't understand his function and had no notion of how to begin.

The little red schoolhouse was despondent. It wanted to cry. Its windows misted up. Retreating into a state of contemplation, it asked itself, "What is the problem? We all agree on the goal of our instruction. The students want to be fluent speakers of the language. The teachers want their students to be fluent speakers of the language.

"Why have we not found the solution?" moaned the schoolhouse in despair. Sadly it never occurred to the little red schoolhouse that no one, not even the language experts, had defined what "fluent" really meant.

Clifford's fable ends by noting that it is important to describe the ends before choosing the means. I disagree with Clifford. I don't believe that defining what oral proficiency is will help in the search for effective methodology. Describing *how* oral proficiency is acquired is the way to decide what methods to use. The problem is that language researchers still don't know for certain how language is acquired.

I would like to end Clifford's fable differently. Al Smith, language teacher in the little red schoolhouse, goes to talk to the King.

"King," says I, "Stop your crying. We've tried hard, and even though most of the students aren't fluent, we haven't failed. Let's continue the quest. Let's keep reading the research and experimenting. Let's keep in touch with the linguists, the psychologists, the psychotherapists, the physicians, the mathematicians, the neurologists, even the priests and the nuns. They've got ideas and have helped us in the past. And I've got twenty more good years to teach *Bonjour*. Call on me. I'll be around."

NOTES

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Stephen D. Krashen and Tracy D. Terrell, *The Natural Approach* (Hayward, California: The Alemany Press, 1983); James J. Asher, *Learning Another Language Through Actions: The Complete Teacher's Guidebook*, 2d ed. (Los Gatos, California: Sky Oaks Productions, Inc., 1982); James E. Alatis, Howard B. Altman, Penelope M. Alatis, eds., *The Second Language Classroom: Directions for the 1980's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).
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